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UNCORKED

May is Wine Month in Oregon, and in appreciation — and celebration — of all things vined and juicy, *EW* put together its annual edition of “Uncorked.” Writers and photographers came together to shed light on the impacts wine has had on our home-y wedge of the South Willamette Valley.

First, run along with the Grapes of Half Marathon, a 13.1-mile jaunt through the bucolic backcountry roads between three participating wineries — Noble Estate, Silvan Ridge and Sweet Cheeks (glasses of wine for those who cross, rides to Silvan for more). Pink Buffalo Racing helped organize the May 22 race, promising a beautiful course among spectators including, apparently, a running pig.

Next, learn more about two popular restaurateurs — Beppe Macchi of Beppe and Gianni's, and Wendy Watson, *maitre d'* of Rye — who have created wine programs that tickle diners' palates and complement their fare.

After that, meet Angela and Kristian Ferry, co-owners of Abbelone Vineyard and producers of some superb pinot noir (their 2013 vintage rang the bell for flavors and texture) and other fine wines. Although they've been bottling their juice since 2006, Abbelone is still one of the new kids on this region's wine block, but certainly worth getting to know: This kid has some great toys.

Finally, *EW* wine columnist Lance Sparks (tha's me) takes us into an in-depth look at how some local wineries and their owners contribute to area charities and nonprofits to benefit our communities. It's a story of generosity and innovation in the eternal struggle between available means and acute needs. Wine makes good neighbors.

We've only scratched at the surface. And don't worry: Brewers and distillers will get their due in future special issues, coming soon to your *EW*. — *Lance Sparks*



Wine List Wonder

The difference between a good wine list and a great one STORY BY VANESSA SALVIA • PHOTOS BY TODD COOPER

Nearly every restaurant sells some type of wine, but just ordering “red” or “white” and not even glancing at the selections means you could be seriously missing out. Many of Eugene’s restaurants offer interesting and affordable wine lists that showcase both regionals and wine from the corners of the Earth.

“A good wine should be cleansing to the palate and get you excited for the next bite,” says Beppe Macchi, owner of Beppe & Gianni’s Trattoria on 19th Avenue. Macchi hails from the tiny island of Favignana off the northwest tip of Sicily, and serves only Italian wine in his restaurant.

Macchi travels to Italy yearly to try new wines, and he hand-selects wine for the trattoria based on what he believes his clientele will appreciate and the changing palates of diners. “Italian wine is not like California wine,” he says. “They don’t use oak, and it is made with grapes that can be unfamiliar.”

When Macchi is asked to help select a wine for a customer, he inquires about what meal the person is choosing as well as budget. “Everyone has a range they want to spend,” he says. “They should not be embarrassed to give a budget because it helps me to narrow it down. People will also ask if they can drink a red wine with fish. It used to be, no, but now it is OK.”

Beppe & Gianni’s wine list is about 180 labels strong, and all complement the menu as a whole. “There is not a wine that you can go wrong with on my menu,” Macchi says, smiling broadly and sweeping his arms to showcase the variety. “Our wine list is very special to me.”

Wendy Watson, the *maître d’* at Rye on 3rd near downtown, says a great wine list will pair with the menu and offer multiple price points, from good but inexpensive



to a couple of “big guns” that will be both delicious and more costly.

“A great wine list will have some focus that goes with the restaurant rather than a little scattering of everything, and will often have some hidden gems that you might need to ask about but may open a whole new area of wine to you,” she says.

Rye is styled after a European village pub with food similar to what you would find in the small towns of Spain, Italy or France, and Watson’s wine list reflects those countries. However, the restaurant brings those foods to life with fresh Northwest ingredients, which can be enjoyed with our local wines.

“Ninety-five percent of our food comes from within 300 miles, so we also have a large selection of wines grown here,” Watson says. “We feel that Oregon and Washington get hugely overshadowed by California, and we thumb our noses at Cali wines. We also like to make sure that our wines are not the same ones that you can find just anywhere.”

Watson says she is proud to offer the 2014 white pinot noir by Seufert Winery in Dayton (\$53) that represents the new category of Oregon pinots made by crushing the grapes, immediately removing the stems and skins and fermenting the juice.

Rye is adding a category of \$6 whites meant to pair well with food or be sipped solo. “It will be obscure, inexpensive, delightful, whimsical white wines,” she says, perfect for the patio.

At any restaurant with a selection beyond “would you like red or white,” customers can and should order any wine and feel comfortable that it will work with the menu. However, those restaurants will often have something meant to pair with a specific dish, so ask.

“Sometimes we have wines that will go much better with a specific dish, and we welcome questions about them,” Watson says. “I want to tell customers to step outside their comfort zones with us. Try new things, ask about different things, experiment with different wines and with different foods. That is part of why you go out to eat — to try something different!” ❖

KRISTIAN FERRY AT
ABELLONE VINEYARD

New Wine on the Block

Pinot noir grapes abound at Abbelone Vineyard

STORY BY RACHAEL CARNES • PHOTOS BY TRASK BEDORTHA

“Our property used to be Christensen Brothers Ranch, a working rodeo stock ranch for horses,” says Abbelone Vineyard co-owner Angela Ferry. In the routine operations of running the winery, “we find lots of remnants from those days, like horse bits and fencing,” she says.

Ferry, a financial recruiter, and her husband, Kristian Ferry, a surgical oncologist, bought their 34-acre property in 2002.

“We planted our first vines that spring,” Ferry says. Now, 6 acres of the Abbelone site is planted with vines of pinot noir.

Abbelone Vineyard takes its name from Kristian Ferry’s mother: “It’s a Danish name, and she passed away the year that they bought the land,” explains general manager Heather Jackson. “She was such an inspiring woman that they named their vineyard after her.”

Nestled on the backside of Spencer Butte (across from the Cascade Raptor Center), Abbelone sits “in a bit of a

valley,” Ferry says, “and we think this is why our site is unusually hot.”

When it comes to pinot, a little heat is a good thing. Though considered around the world to be among the finest wines, pinot grapes are also some of the trickiest fruit to grow, as their densely compact clusters make the grapes particularly vulnerable to several kinds of rot.

A couple of years ago, for example, many wineries in Yamhill County, renown for its pinot, lost a great percentage of their yields to persistently cold and rainy



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weather, throughout a summer that should have been hotter and drier. The warmer weather would have allowed the fruit to ripen and to develop the naturally sweet, complex and earthy flavors that we love about pinot.

So perhaps Abbelone's warmer climate helps ensure a good crop, buffering them from the fickle, fussy nature of the pinot vine itself.

"We produce a bolder, bigger style pinot noir," Ferry says.

Growing is step one. But becoming a vintner?

"Kristian makes all of the wine," Ferry notes. "He is self-taught."

Kristian Ferry worked early on at Sineann Winery in St. Paul, Oregon, and then learned locally from winemaker friends.

"And he continues to get local advice from them," Ferry says. "We have a great community of winemakers who help each other out."

While not certified biodynamic — which is a "spiritual-ethical-ecological approach to agriculture" that proponents suggest promotes a healthy self-sustainability — Abbelone operates as such. "We put everything back into the vineyard and use nothing that is inorganic," Ferry says.

After nurturing the fruit for a few years, the Ferrys first bottled their 2006 vintage, which was "a very small batch,"

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Ferry says. "Then our wines started selling wholesale to local super markets and wine shops with our 2009 vintage."

Abbelone offers pinot noir, a rosé of pinot noir, a pinot noir blanc, pinot gris and a syrah, made with fruit bought from the Rogue Valley.

Abbelone's '14 gris has a light straw hue, smelling faintly of melon and hay, with a bright, spicy flavor studded with green apple, pear and fennel.

Their '14 rosé has a bright petal color, a "slight hint of a recently legalized herb" with grapefruit, rose petals, and morning rain, cinnamon and carnations.

Their sultry '13 noir is a rich cola color with notes of oak, chocolate, cherry and pepper.

Abbelone's '13 syrah is complex, with hints of smoke, roasted meats, currants and light jam.

"We are only sold locally in Eugene and on the coast right now," Ferry says. "All of the Market of Choice stores carry Abbelone, and some bottle shops and a few restaurants, including Marché."

If you can't settle on a bottle, Ferry invites customers out for a tasting. ❖❖❖

The Cellar at Abbelone Vineyard and the Vineyard Courtyard are open every weekend Memorial Day through Labor Day, 5 to 9 pm Friday and Saturday, and noon to 5 pm Sunday, at 85505 Christensen Road. To contact the tasting room, call 541-344-6358.

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The Giving Vine

A look at how the local wine industry gives back to the community BY LANCE SPARKS

The popularity of Oregon wine, especially our pinot noirs, has soared. From a handful of wineries in the 1970s, we have seen a near-explosion: Now there are more than 400 wineries in the state, with that number increasing almost daily. Wine contributes several billion dollars annually to Oregon's economy. The wineries and their owners also contribute greatly to various Oregon charities and nonprofits.

How, and how much?

EW decided to discuss the matter with some local wineries and their owners, known both for the quality of their wines and their generosity to deserving causes. We called Danuta Pfeiffer of Pfeiffer Vineyards; Jonathan Scott Oberlander of J. Scott Cellars; Alan Mitchell of Territorial Vineyards & Wine; and Ed King of King Estate. We asked how often they get requests for donations of wine and how they have responded.

Organizers for charities often approach prospective wine donors with two pitches: first, the worthiness of the cause (almost all meet this criterion) and second, that the winery will benefit from exposure to guests invited to a benefit.

Since the requests for donations can come at a rate that may seem overwhelming, some winery owners have chosen to focus their donations on certain interests.

Winery owners who spoke to EW gave answers that ranged from funny (one, who shall remain unnamed, says the requests come so fast "it sounds like rain on a tin roof") to regretful ("We wish we could give to all. We just can't.")

As we talked, Danuta Pfeiffer checked her e-mail. She had two requests: "Today, a local dog park asked for wine — and diabetes!"

Jonathan Oberlander estimates the number of requests at about "three a week." Alan Mitchell processes "easily once a week, minimum." King put the number at "hundreds a year, from all over the country."

This rate has forced owners to focus their giving either on the local communities or on specific charities that somehow touch the owners' interests.

Ed King is CEO of Oregon's largest producer —

ALAN MITCHELL
OF TERRITORIAL
VINEYARDS



PHOTO BY TRASK BEDORTH

300,000 cases from 1,000 acres, plus other sources — and King has resources to make some special contributions to the community; for example, King Estate donated 4 acres of land and partnered with Lane Electric and Solar City to build a solar array on the property. All power generated by the array goes directly into the grid, not just the winery.

King also sponsors Food for Lane County programs — "because no one should go hungry," he says — such as the annual Chefs' Night Out. Additionally, King Estate donates food directly from its extensive orchards and gardens.

The Pfeiffers' facilities are located near Junction City, and Pfeiffer notes that they give frequently to their adopted community: "Definitely Junction City High School, the library, local food aid."

Pfeiffer makes the point that their winery is also committed

to furthering research into Fanconi anemia, the disease that took the lives of two daughters (Kirsten and Katie) of the late Dave Frohnmayer, former president of the University of Oregon. Additionally, Pfeiffer Vineyards sponsors the area's annual Daffodil Festival, "a big community bash," Pfeiffer calls it.

Sponsorship is a means of contributing money that doesn't involve contributing wine, very important for small producers like Pfeiffer. Mitchell noted that Territorial's co-owners, Victoria and Jeff Wilson-Charles, sponsor The Shedd musical programs, and Territorial is also a direct sponsor of Art and the Vineyard. Partly because Mitchell has kids in Junction City schools, the winery actively supports JC athletics.

Michelle Kaufmann of the Oregon Wine Board (OWB) summarized a report on charitable giving released this year — in 2014, OWB studied contributions to charities, using data from 2013, showing that wineries generated an estimated \$3.5 million in charitable giving for that year.

OWB found strong support, especially for Salud!, an annual wine auction devised in 1994 by winery owners and some physicians from Tuality Healthcare in Hillsboro, intended to provide funds and medical services for the seasonal workers who pick the fruit, prune the vines and, as King says, "make wine possible."

Since 2005, the November event has been hosted at McMenamins Edgefield. Additionally, Portland-area charities receive benefits from the March black-tie Classic Wine Auction. Down south in Jacksonville (Oregon, that is), the August-held Oregon Wine Experience raises funds for Children's Miracle Network.

In November, winemakers hold the Gorge Gives Back and donate a percentage of sales "to area charities and causes." Wineries in Washington, California and other regions are also active contributors.

Oberlander of J. Scott Cellars says, "We try to spread the love around."

Of their giving, Pfeiffer says, "It's about being a responsible, good neighbor."

King puts it this way: "It's part of our mission. We live here, too. We're proud to be part of this community." ❖

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Sprint and Sip

The Grapes of Half Marathon offers a run through wine country BY AMY SCHNEIDER

Regionians have many loves — the outdoors, beer, having someone pump their gas for them — but high on that list of favorites are wine and running. In 2013, the minds at Pink Buffalo Racing devised an event that combined the two in glorious perfection: the Grapes of Half Marathon.

“That always gets a laugh from literature buffs,” says Piper Ruiz of Pink Buffalo Racing, a local race management company that puts on the annual half marathon that meanders through Eugene’s wine country, starting at Noble Estate Vineyard, passing by Silvan Ridge Winery and ending at Sweet Cheeks Winery.

This year’s run takes place May 22.

The idea started with wine aficionados at Pink Buffalo, but the three participating wineries were happy to get involved.

“As luck would have it, it’s a perfect half marathon” from Noble Estate to Sweet Cheeks, Ruiz says — an even 13.1 miles.

The race starts downhill and then gives runners a flat stretch early on along Gimpl Hill, Pine Grove, Erickson and Crow roads. A challenging 2-mile uphill jaunt starts at Doane Road, then levels out past Silvan Ridge with a final uphill push to Sweet Cheeks.

“You have an end goal of wine waiting for you at the finish line,” says Jessica Ramp, general manager at Sweet Cheeks. Ramp ran the Grapes of Half Marathon in 2013, and she says the race is “really peaceful, with lots of agriculture.”

The route takes runners by fields with horses and goats, and while it can be an idyllic gambol alongside pastoral scenery, sometimes the animals get up close and personal.

“Last year, people saw a 3-foot-long bull snake, and two of the three years we have produced this event a hog has gotten out on the course and run with participants,” Ruiz laughs. “The second time it happened, a woman took a picture, which was hysterical.”

People line the road as runners pass by, sitting in lawn chairs to cheer along half-marathoners. Aid stations also fill out the course, as well as certified flaggers at road junctions so that runners don’t have to worry about the flow of traffic.

At the end of the race, participants are greeted by their reward: an event wine glass with three wine tickets, one for each of the participating wineries. At Sweet Cheeks, runners also get to make up for all those expended calories

SEASONED HALF MARATHON RUNNER MARYALICIA VERDECCIA FROM PORTLAND, OREGON AND FIRST TIME HALF MARATHON FINISHER KEN KREICK FROM EUGENE CELEBRATE AT SILVAN RIDGE WINERY



PHOTO BY MARYALICIA VERDECCIA

by sampling post-race refreshments, including sandwiches, hummus, cheese and chips.

A party bus is on hand to shuttle runners back to Silvan Ridge for their second glass of wine.

“It really is a party — run, have fun, eat and enjoy,” Ruiz says.

“A glass of wine will never taste as good as the one you have post-race,” Ramp adds, “because you worked really, really hard for it.” ❖

The Grapes of Half Marathon starts at 8 am Sunday, May 22, at Noble Estate Vineyard, 29210 Gimpl Hill Road. An alternative to the half marathon is a 5K (\$25-\$30), which starts at 9 am at Silvan Ridge Winery, 27012 Briggs Hill Road. Registration for the half marathon is \$75 through May 21, and \$80 on the day of the race. Register at pinkbuffaloracing.com.

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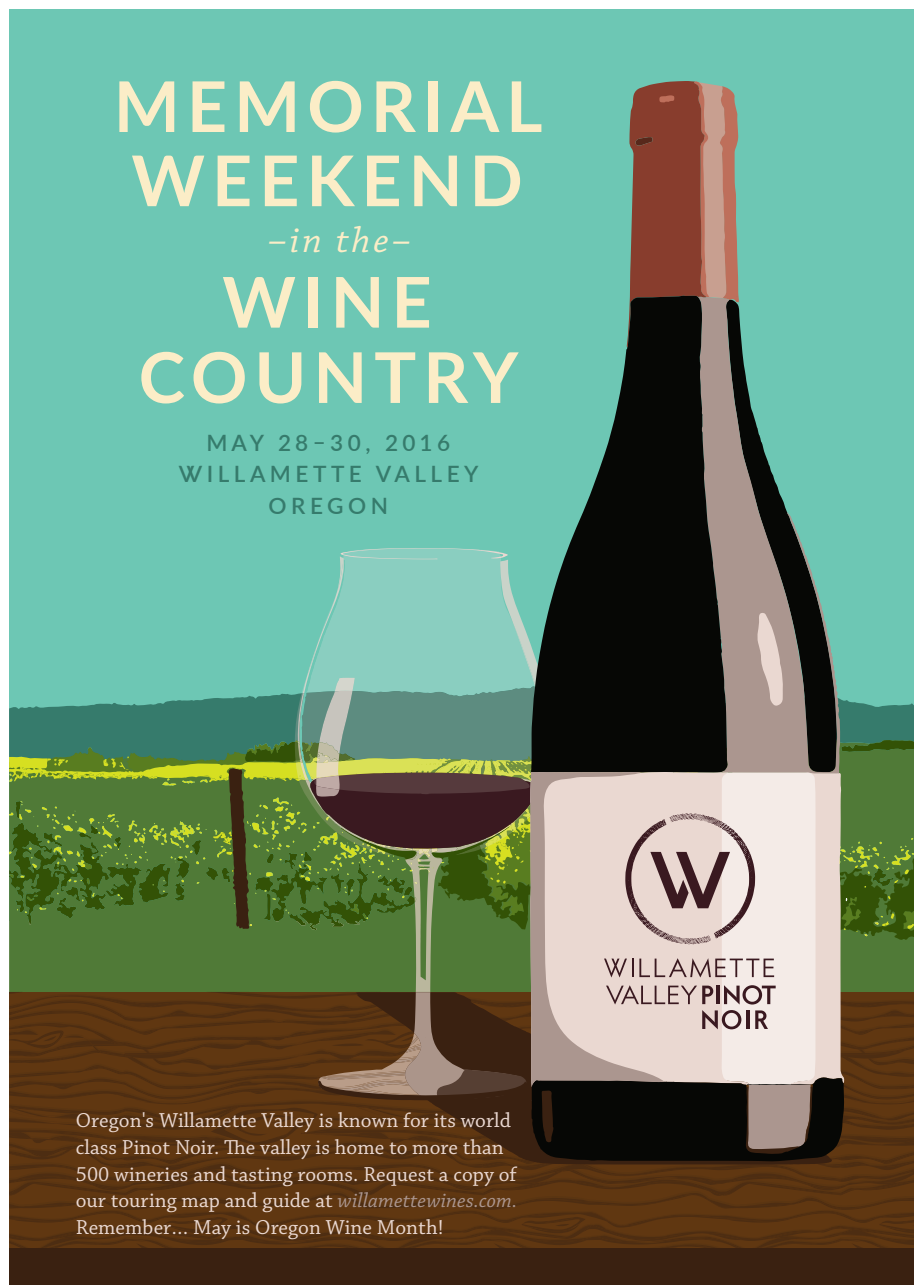
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